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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000170

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: NORTH KIVU TENSIONS UNDERSCORE NEED FOR SYSTEM

REFORMS

REF: KINSHASA 0153 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

1. (C) Actions by "insurgent" FARDC troops over the weekend of January 21, reported in reftel and previous cables, represent a major setback to efforts to establish stability in the province. There are continuing clashes in the province between "insurgent" troops and primarily MONUC forces. The immediate security crisis has largely passed, however, thanks to MONUC intervention. More worrisome in terms of long-term risks is that existing prejudices, insecurities, and divisions have again been brought to the fore. Fed by sometimes inflammatory and often misleading domestic and international press reports of the problems, old passions have been stirred up, including a new wave of anti-Rwandan sentiment in Kinshasa and the east that is clearly unhelpful in the domestic context, as well as to efforts to normalize regional relations. A deliberate effort by the GDRC's top leaders to discount popular allegations of GOR misconduct, stating for example that there was no evidence of GOR involvement, helped keep official policy on an even and reasoned basis through the initial hours of the crisis, but public opinion about Rwandans and their perceived allies in the DRC is less easily assuaged. (Note: There has been no/no evidence that the GOR was involved in any way in the January 21 - 22 events. End note.)

2. (C) By most accounts, the action of the disastrously-bad former 5th Integrated Brigade Commander, Colonel Kasikili, a former Mai Mai officer, was a significant contributor to the problem. During his relatively brief command, Kasikili reportedly undertook actions based on strong prejudices against Kinyarwanda-speaking people, seeking to expel them from the Brigade and generally denigrating the civilian population. Soldiers in "ex-ANC" brigades (former armed wing of the RCD-Goma party) and those of Governor Serufuli's former militia already feared entering into the national integration process, correctly reasoning that once part of new integrated brigades, the former units would be broken up and the new integrated units susceptible to deployment anywhere in the country. With little confidence in the national government to protect Tutsi or Hutu populations in the east, many soldiers were reluctant to go to "brassage" centers or leave their home areas - and by implication leave their families and communities relatively unprotected. Kasikili's actions and policies directly fed these fears, leading disgruntled units to stage their "takeover" of various North Kivu towns.

3. (C) Kasikili's removal (and possible future prosecution) and relatively rapid MONUC action largely contained the immediate crisis, and MONUC's continuing presence and operations in Rutshuru and the surrounding area are serving to restore the security environment, such as it exists in North Kivu. As Vice President Ruberwa (RCD-Goma president) told the Ambassador last week, however, the unhappy soldiers are now more resistant than ever to the integration process. They are asking what happens if another Kasikili is sent to the area once they are gone and nobody is left to protect their families at home. Rebel general Laurent Nkunda and other troublemakers, likely including some Kinshasa-based politicians and possibly the remnant leaders of Ituri militias, are all too happy to exploit such fears, arguing for example that Kinshasa can never be trusted to protect "Rwandophones."

4. (C) On the other side of the divide, lurid press accounts of the supposed Nkunda- or Rwandan-led new insurgency have brought forth renewed overt expressions of suspicion of Rwandans, never far from the surface in much of the DRC, and of the Rwandans' perceived Congolese allies. In a meeting of the Essential Legislation Mixed Commission last week, for example, involving the senior officers of the Senate and National Assembly and chiefs of diplomatic missions, some comments regarding the situation in North Kivu brought forth from the parliamentarians waves of rhetoric and charges as to what renewed havoc this supposed terrible alliance, symbolized by Nkunda, is now planning to wreak on true Congolese. While Nkunda's ability to create a major security threat to the province is limited absent significant support from some source, he and similar spoilers can keep the pot

boiling in the areas where they operate. Nkunda in particular evokes near-panic among many Congolese which does not lend to the most reasoned or most productive government actions.

15. (C) In the short term, efforts by Governor Serufuli, as

well as by a Ministerial-level team representing various ethnicities and political groups scheduled to travel from Kinshasa, are helpful to reduce immediate tensions (note: although the latter is in fairly typical fashion late getting under way. End note). Redeployment of at least some of the problem military units and replacement by other integrated units can be helpful as well. These activities, while needed, represent little more than short-term palliatives absent visible progress that addresses underlying structural problems. The frustration expressed by Governor Seufuli (reported refuel) presumably reflects his awareness that his heretofore successful maneuvering among the various factions and groups in the province is inadequate to address the core problem.

16. (C) Real solutions to the North Kivu problems lie in various tracks, all of them representing long-term efforts with no easy or quick answers. At the core is the effort to build a reasonably competent FARDC military. This involves substantial further progress in the integration/DDR program, reforms to provide at least minimally adequate regular salary payments and other support, establishing a logistics support capability, and general professional training and equipment programs. A minimally competent and supported military is the only way to mitigate internal FARDC discontent, and to address in a sustained manner security threats posed by various domestic and foreign armed groups operating in the area (e.g., Nkunda forces, FDLR, ADF/NALU, Mai Mai). Foreign armed forces, including those of MONUC, can only provide short-term security absent a Congolese capability that can be sustained. New interventions by Rwandan or Ugandan forces in DRC territory would further destabilize the situation in the rest of the DRC as well as North Kivu, rolling the situation back to that of several years ago. In terms of the general population, continued and sustained efforts to reduce overall tension levels in the province and to decrease polarization of Kivu society must also be pushed forward. Incremental progress in these areas was being achieved (albeit too slowly) in North Kivu, as elsewhere. By any measure, the overall security environment in the province is substantially better than it was a year ago, much less several years ago. Clearly, however, the situation is far from satisfactory, and the January 21 - 22 events certainly have set efforts back and underscored the fragility of the situation.

17. (C) Economic progress is also essential to stability in the Kivus. Again, substantial progress was being made, reflected in efforts to rebuild Kivu livestock herds and restart agricultural production, and in substantially expanded commerce and general economic activity seen in Goma and elsewhere in the region. Needed further progress, however, obviously depends on a reasonably stable overall political and security context.

18. (C) There are substantial efforts underway by the European Union and its member states, Angola, and South Africa to address the central military structural reform issues. (Note: The USG does not have significant resources committed to DRC security sector reform programs. End note.) While representing major commitments, whether these efforts are adequate to achieve the needed results in a timely manner is still an open question, and the North Kivu events have highlighted once more the importance and urgency of the central reform program.

19. (C) There is a basis for solutions. The remarkable success of the voter registration efforts in the Kivus and the extraordinary turnout rates in the December constitutional referendum underscore the massive popular desire for peace. Certainly, immediate efforts must be maintained to reduce as much as possible the threats to security posed by the armed groups in the area. The key to long-term success, however, is to tap into that overwhelming popular sentiment to reinforce the links among various groups (i.e., reconciliation and peaceful cohabitation) and long-term peace. This must be accompanied by visible and real political progress to establish coherent GDRC authority and operations in North Kivu and elsewhere (i.e., the Transition political process, elections, and post-election continued reforms), and structural improvements in the security sector. All these represent large, complicated programs that will require major resources and sustained commitments from donors and responsible Congolese leaders extending well beyond elections and the Transition period.

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